

Claims

[c1] A method of retrieving information (10) associated with an object (12) present in a media stream (14), said method comprising the steps of:

- defining a user-selectable region (18) in a layer (20) separate from the media stream (14) without accessing individual frames of the media stream (14), the user-selectable region (18) corresponding to the object (12) present in the media stream (14);
- defining a link (34) to the information (10) associated with the object (12);
- linking the user-selectable region (18) in the layer (20) to the link (34) for the information (10) associated with the object (12);
- positioning the user-selectable region (18) in the layer (20) over the object (12) during playback of the media stream (14);
- disposing the layer (20) adjacent the media stream (14) without interfering with playback of the media stream (14);
- playing the media stream (14) in a player;
- selecting the user-selectable region (18) from within the layer (20) during playback of the media stream (14); and

accessing the information (10) associated with the object (12) in response to selecting the user-selectable region (18) from within the layer (20).

- [c2] A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the step of defining the user-selectable region (18) is further defined as the step of defining positional data for the object (12) based upon a position and size of the object (12) present in the media stream (14).
- [c3] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of re-defining the user-selectable region (18) within the layer (20) in response to the object (12) changing within the media stream (14).
- [c4] A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the step of defining the user-selectable region (18) further includes the step of defining a plurality of user-selectable regions (18) for the object (12) in response to the object (12) being present in a plurality of positions in the media stream (14).
- [c5] A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the step of positioning the user-selectable region (18) is further defined as synchronizing the user-selectable region (18) within the layer (20) to a position of the object (12) in the media stream (14) without accessing individual frames of

the media stream (14).

- [c6] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of displaying an icon (36) within the layer (20) representing the user-selectable region (18) present in the layer (20) capable of being selected.
- [c7] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of monitoring an identifying characteristic for the object (12) in the media stream (14).
- [c8] A method as set forth in claim 7 wherein the step of monitoring the identifying characteristic is further defined as monitoring the media stream (14) for a predetermined color palette.
- [c9] A method as set forth in claim 7 wherein the step of monitoring the identifying characteristic is further defined as monitoring the media stream (14) for a predetermined symbol.
- [c10] A method as set forth in claim 7 further including the step of detecting a change in the identifying characteristic and re-defining the user-selectable region (18) within the layer (20) in response to detecting the change of the identifying characteristic.
- [c11] A method as set forth in claim 10 wherein the step of

detecting the change in the identifying characteristic is further defined as automatically detecting the change in the identifying characteristic for the object (12) during playback of the media stream (14).

- [c12] A method as set forth in claim 11 wherein the step of re-defining the user-selectable region (18) is further defined as automatically re-defining the user-selectable region (18) within the layer (20) in response to automatically detecting the change in the identifying characteristic for the object (12).
- [c13] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of stopping playback of the media stream (14) in response to selecting the user-selectable region (18) from within the layer (20).
- [c14] A method as set forth in claim 13 further including the step of displaying the object information (10) in at least one of the layer (20), the player, and a window separate from the layer (20) and the player, while the playback of the media stream (14) is stopped.
- [c15] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of continuing playback of the media stream (14) in response to selecting the user-selectable region (18) from within the layer (20).

- [c16] A method as set forth in claim 15 further including the step of displaying the object information (10) in at least one of the layer (20) and a window separate from the layer (20) while the playback of the media stream (14) continues in the player.
- [c17] A method as set forth in claim 1 further including the step of establishing two-way communication between a user interacting with the layer (20) and a provider transmitting a video signal (40) having the media stream (14) and the layer (20).
- [c18] A method as set forth in claim 17 further including the step of collecting user data related to selection of links made during playback of the media stream (14) present therein.
- [c19] A method as set forth in claim 18 further including the step of transmitting the user data to the provider to track the links selected from within the layer (20).
- [c20] A method of providing a video signal (40) from a provider to a user, said method comprising the steps of:
 - transmitting a first component of the video signal (40) having a media stream (14) therein;
 - transmitting a second component of the video signal (40) having a layer (20) with user-selectable regions (18) cor-

responding to objects (12) present in the media stream (14) and linked to information (10) associated with the object (12);
receiving the video signal (40) with a player;
disposing the layer (20) adjacent the media stream (14) without interfering with playback of the media stream (14);
playing the media stream (14) in the player;
positioning the user-selectable regions (18) within the layer (20) to the objects (12) present in the media stream (14) during playback; and
enabling the user-selectable region (18) to allow the user to select the user-selectable regions (18) and access the information (10) associated with the object (12).

- [c21] A method as set forth in claim 20 further including the step of establishing two-way communication between the user interacting with the layer (20) and the provider transmitting the video signal (40).
- [c22] A method as set forth in claim 21 further including the step of collecting user data related to selection of links made during playback of the media stream (14).
- [c23] A method as set forth in claim 22 further including the step of transmitting the user data to the provider to track the links selected from within the layer (20).

[c24] A device for storing information (10) associated with an object (12) present in a media stream (14), said device comprising:

- a media stream (14) with an object (12) therein; information (10) associated with said object (12);
- a layer (20) for disposition adjacent said media stream (14) during playback and having a user-selectable region (18) corresponding to said object (12) in said media stream (14); and
- a link (34) between said user-selectable region (18) and said information (10) associated with said object (12) for accessing said information (10) associated with said object (12) in response to said user-selectable region (18) being selected.

[c25] A device as set forth in claim 24 further including positional information defined for said user-selectable region (18) based upon a position and size of said object (12) present in said media stream (14).

[c26] A device as set forth in claim 25 further including a plurality of user-selectable regions (18) in said layer (20) corresponding to a plurality of objects (12).

[c27] A device as set forth in claim 24 further including an icon (36) disposed in said layer (20) in response to said

user-selectable region (18) being present in said layer (20).

- [c28] A device as set forth in claim 24 further including a detector for monitoring and detecting an identifying characteristic for the object (12) with said layer (20).
- [c29] A device as set forth in claim 28 wherein said detector is further defined as detecting a color palette.
- [c30] A device as set forth in claim 28 wherein said detector is further defined as detecting a predetermined symbol.
- [c31] A device as set forth in claim 24 further including a window for displaying information (10) associated with the object (12).
- [c32] A device as set forth in claim 31 wherein said window is further defined as being displayed in said layer (20).
- [c33] A device as set forth in claim 31 wherein said window is further defined as being displayed in said media stream (14).
- [c34] A device as set forth in claim 31 wherein said window is further defined as a window separate from said layer (20) and said media stream (14).